

**Wednesday 7 December 2016 - Legislative Council - Government Businesses Scrutiny
Committee B - Port Arthur Historic Site Management Authority**

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

GOVERNMENT BUSINESSES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE B

Wednesday 7 December 2016

MEMBERS

Mrs Armitage
Mr Dean
Mr Finch
Ms Rattray (Chair)
Mr Valentine (Deputy Chair)
Mr Willie

IN ATTENDANCE

Hon. Matthew Groom MP, Minister for Environment, Parks and Heritage

Port Arthur Historic Site Management Authority

Professor Sharon Sullivan AO, Chair, PAHSMA Board
Mr Stephen Large, Chief Executive Officer PAHSMA
Dr Jane Harrington, Director Conservation and Infrastructure
Ms Anne McVilly, Director, Tourism Operations
Ms Nicky Roberts, Chief Financial Officer

The committee resumed at 10.33 a.m.

CHAIR - Minister, welcome to this year's Estimates process and the Port Arthur Historic Site Management Authority scrutiny and we welcome your team at the table. We will invite you to introduce your team and give a brief overview, then we will get started on questions. I am sure that members need no introduction as you know everybody and we all have nametags, so thank you.

Mr GROOM - Thank you, Chair, and it is a delight to be here to be able to talk about the performance of PAHSMA before the Committee and it is a good story. At the table we

have Professor Sharon Sullivan, who is the Chair, doing a fantastic job, Stephen Large, as the CEO and Jane Harrington who has responsibility for conservation and infrastructure.

CHAIR - Old hands at this, so welcome back.

Mr GROOM - Also we have Nicky Roberts here. I will make the point that we have an excellent team at PAHSMA and we should be very appreciative of that fact.

CHAIR - I should qualify, it should have been experienced hands and not old hands. The old hands are on this side.

Mr GROOM - It has been a good year, Chair. I want to briefly touch on some of the highlights and then I will hand over to Professor Sullivan. We are very pleased with the number of awards that were won this year. In 2015 the Port Arthur Historic Site won the major tourist attraction category and the cultural tourism category of the Tasmanian Tourism Awards. At the Qantas Australian Tourism Awards the site won silver in both categories. I was very pleased to learn of another award Port Arthur received from *Australian Traveller* magazine. They recently announced their 2016 People's Choice Award in which readers of the magazine vote. I am pleased to say the Port Arthur Historic Site was named this year's best historical site by the Australian Traveller People's Choice Awards. That is a national award, and I quote from the magazine -

Why you love it... The World Heritage-listed, 19th-century penal station, once home to the most notorious British criminals, is perhaps Australia's most gripping historic site. It is places like this that bear tales of a time gone by and contribute to our national identity.

In addition, we have had a pleasing result in visitation. The Port Arthur Historic Site welcomed 344 180 visitors during the year, which is up 13.2 per cent on the previous year - that is, the day visitors. We have seen growth in important international markets. China has been on a significant trajectory and we have maintained those numbers, thereabouts, for the year. We have seen a significant increase within that visitation from Hong Kong, which is interesting. It is up something like 58 per cent and that is significant. The Cascades Female Factory welcomed 30 725 visitors, which is an increase of 7.2 per cent. This year has seen exceptional growth in the cruise ship sector, with 10 ships visiting Port Arthur and 22 are scheduled for the current year. That is another great story and links into another one, the Three Capes Track. Port Arthur forms part of the Three Capes Track experience. Those bookings have increased significantly and are now in excess of 13 000 confirmed bookings, which is an extraordinary result. With this success come challenges in managing visitation. There is a lot of work going on with the new visitor centre, which we can talk about at the appropriate point.

We are also doing important work with the authority in relation to other properties and we have discussed Maria Island. They provided a report, which we are currently considering. It has been a great year and I thank the authority for all their efforts.

Prof. SULLIVAN - We had the memorial this year for the twentieth anniversary of the tragedy. It took a great deal of work and effort but it was worth everything people put into it. We have had very good feedback about it from all over Australia. A lot of people associated with the tragedy who hadn't been before came this year. The original thought by a

number of the victims was we would fade out gradually, but when the twentieth anniversary came around we had a very strong feeling. That was a highlight of the year, if you like. It is not the sort of memorial you want to have but it was very healing for a lot of people.

On Boxing Day we celebrated the 150th anniversary of the oldest wood chopping competition in Australia.

CHAIR - That is very dear to my heart, Professor Sullivan, because I am patron of the Axemen's Association. My dad was a very good axeman.

Prof. SULLIVAN - One of the outcomes of us appointing a local community committee down there is they have revived that competition and it is now going strong. We are very pleased about that. We also celebrated the thirtieth anniversary of our partnership with Navigators. It is a lot of hard work but also a lot of local tradition we are looking after there. We have also done some less glamorous work. We had to do a lot of work on the coal mine, which you will not see, but it means the main shaft has been stabilised. That is the sort of thing we have to pay a lot of attention to. It costs a lot of money, but it is not something the public sees, but it is certainly very important.

CHAIR - Beaconsfield is just finding out about that.

Prof. SULLIVAN - Yes. The new visitor centre is coming along. It is a lot of stress for our staff. When we did the penitentiary we had to rearrange visitors. Everybody wants to go in and see the penitentiary. We could not do that for nine months while we were fixing it. We will have the same issues, as you can imagine, with the visitor centre. Part of our strategy is being very careful in looking after visitors, which will place a lot of strain on our visitor management people. We are very concerned to make sure that, while fixing the visitor centre, we are not unduly interfering with people's experience.

We are expecting twice the number of cruise ships this year. Once again it is really challenging as well as exciting, because we have to be very careful not to destroy the experience. We all have experience of heritage or tourism places which are just overrun, and the experience is not there anymore. I am not saying we are at that stage, but we have to look after that very carefully.

We continue our international commitments and links, especially with China. We are expecting a group of very senior heritage managers to come and do a course at Port Arthur this coming year, for which they are paying. This is in part because of the excellence of Australian management, but also because of the reputation of Port Arthur.

We get a great deal of benefit and assistance from our advisory committees, both at Port Arthur and at the Female Factory. They make a real inroad for us to the community. We get very worthwhile feedback and ideas from them. The board considers itself extremely fortunate to have such fabulous staff. We are very conscious of that.

Mr FINCH - You mentioned the visitor centre. I have a note here about a feasibility study for the visitor centre. How concrete are those plans? Are they forging ahead? Is it beyond the feasibility stage? Is it now to a development and building stage?

Mr GROOM - I can assure you it is a real need.

Prof. SULLIVAN - We are very well ahead with it.

Dr HARRINGTON - It has been a very intensive project, looking at the options for us to progress. We came up with four options, which range from the diamond-plated option to the, as I like to say, K&D option. We quickly realized that, in terms of our original brief and what we wanted to achieve, it would be very difficult to afford. What we have come back with is one that will meet our operational needs over the next 15 to 20 years. At the time we did quite a lot of work extrapolating visitor numbers over that period. It is one that will meet our visitor numbers, be able to provide the experience that is needed, and recognise we need to also introduce new operational requirements. A very rigorous process was undertaken to come up with a final recommendation.

The other major thing we had to go through once we had done that was the whole statutory approval process. As part of the DA we were also required to do, as you can understand, a very substantive heritage impact assessment, because we needed to get approval under the EPBC act for both our World Heritage and National Heritage listing status. Obviously also we required approval from the Tasmanian Heritage Council. It would be fair to say it sailed very smoothly through the planning scheme, through the Commonwealth, and through the Tasmanian Heritage Council.

Mr FINCH - Is it on the same site as the current visitor centre?

Dr HARRINGTON - It is an extension of about one third of the building. It will require a bit of reshuffling. There is a huge range of issues, the most important being visual impact and everyone is happy that there will be no substantial visual impact on anything to do with the heritage listing.

Mr FINCH - What mainly drove this, was it the increase in numbers, the confines of the current area?

Prof SULLIVAN - The visitor centre was getting unmanageable. We had queues in the cafe, running into queues to pay for tickets. Being in there at 1 o'clock on a wet Sunday was not a good experience because the visitor numbers are too big.

Mr GROOM - It is a good problem to have.

Prof SULLIVAN - Yes, is it a good problem to have. We also did a detailed feasibility study on whether we should put it there or whether we should move it somewhere else. We believe this is by far the most economic and least intrusive way of dealing with this problem.

Mr WILLIE - On the PAHSMA website it indicates the construction of the new visitor centre is to commence in January. Is that still going to happen?

Dr HARRINGTON - It will commence at the end of January. The tenders have been assessed and we are at the stage of negotiations to appoint a major contractor.

Mr WILLIE - How many tenders were received?

Dr HARRINGTON - We received three. We had an expression of interest process where five people submitted and all were invited to tender and two chose to withdraw.

Mr VALENTINE - One would have to say it is a very successful operation and with all successful operations, try to leverage in different ways. I am harking back to our inquiry on built heritage tourism and, as an aside, it would be interesting to know when the Government might deliver on that response.

Mr GROOM - We are continuing to finalise that response.

Mr VALENTINE - Will we see that before Christmas?

Mr GROOM - I do not want to give you a specific time commitment but we are very keen to finalise that as soon as possible. I am sure you appreciate, from our perspective, we need to make sure we have the right input from the different stakeholders. We have been having discussions with Tourism Tasmania, Heritage Council and Heritage Tasmania, PAHSMA, and a number of other key stakeholders. We recognise the importance of this.

I believe PAHSMA, in many respects, is the gold standard of built heritage tourism. With leveraging, this is an important point. One of the things I have already mentioned is the relationship between Port Arthur and the Three Capes Track which is a good example. Professor, I do not know if you want to talk to this, but the experience has been that through the Three Capes Track, Port Arthur is getting access to a slightly different cohort and being promoted to a different cohort and vice versa. Port Arthur has its own market penetration and the Three Capes Track does and by virtue of the relationship between the two they are both leveraging off each other.

Mr VALENTINE - They are different sectors, aren't they?

Mr GROOM - Yes, that is right.

Prof SULLIVAN - It is our experience that Three Capes is now very well booked with 13 000 bookings, as you probably know. The people who are coming there often would not come to Port Arthur but they get Port Arthur as part of the package and they are using it extensively to buy their last minute supplies. They are also using it to relax either before or after and to get another experience. We have been keen to interest not only cultural heritage enthusiasts but heritage enthusiasts generally and especially people from the natural environment end of things. We feel bringing these things together is important for Tasmania.

Mr VALENTINE - One of the recommendations we made in the built heritage tourism report and some of the representations we have had in relation to this is telling the whole story and building a more complete picture, certainly for Tasman Peninsula. I know you're talking about Maria Island, but there is the Eaglehawk Neck Officers' Quarters, the Dog Line, the opportunity for Eaglehawk Neck to almost play a gateway experience into the whole Tasman Peninsula, as opposed to the Forestier Peninsula, which is before it. Have you given any thought to taking on and building on what those aspects of convict heritage are in Eaglehawk Neck?

Mr GROOM - A broad comment and then I will hand over to Professor Sullivan. Certainly, as you have already identified and as we have spoken about, already we

have a lot of integration there in terms of some of the built heritage assets that we have on the peninsula and more broadly in Tasmania, so we are very committed to the concept of it.

Mr VALENTINE - Parks run the Officers' Quarters, don't they?

Mr GROOM - Yes, but I'm talking more broadly. I am aware of some of the further ideas to do that better and from the Government's perspective we're open to it. One of the things that we've done with the authority, and the board in particular, is to make sure that we're having conversations about how best to look at these types of issues. What we don't want to do is have the authority spread too thinly or be devaluing some of its other areas of responsibility. I think it is really important that we do this in a responsible and considered way. Do you want to talk to that, Professor?

Prof. SULLIVAN - Only to say that we also have had representations from the enthusiastic group at Eaglehawk Neck. There is no doubt at all that it is an absolutely integral part of the Port Arthur story.

Mr VALENTINE - It is the beginning of the story.

Prof. SULLIVAN - It is the beginning of the story, it was part of the convict station really, the whole peninsula was, as we know. The board thinks it is a very logical thing to think about integrating that in some way. It makes sense for Port Arthur as opposed to Parks to manage it, but we are, once again, cautious about this. As the minister has just said, we don't want to spread our butter too thinly on our bread. We think that is a logical thing to do. We think there are some strategic advantages and certainly interpretation advantages in doing it, so we would cautiously welcome any approach to do that.

Mr VALENTINE - It could decongest what is happening at the Port Arthur site if you had facilities at that gateway to, say, register the Three Capes walkers and those sorts of things, especially if the Three Capes walk ended up being from Waterfall Bay right through. I was just interested in that strategic thinking. I realise that it is outside of Port Arthur and it is a more holistic view of what the Port Arthur Historic Site Management Authority and how you might use it to be a more encompassing authority which includes Port Arthur but also has the convict experience, largely, and it might be Maria Island.

Mr GROOM - Yes, we are definitely open to this concept. As Professor Sullivan said, it is important in considering this that we understand all the practical consequences and make sensible judgments. What we are dealing with in PAHSMA at the moment is an extremely successful model. We just want to make sure that any further work that is taken on by the authority is not detracting but in fact enhancing.

As I have already alluded to and you should be aware, we have specifically asked the authority to give consideration to the Maria Island site. I will say there has been very good cooperation between PAHSMA and Parks in exploring those models. I was very pleased to receive the report recently from the joint committee looking into that. The Maria Island one is something the Government is actively considering, but we are aware that there are other potential opportunities that might make a lot of sense. The only point is that we are open to it and we are very happy to consider these things, but we do want to go through it in a very careful, methodical way so as to ensure that we are enhancing and not detracting.

Mr VALENTINE - It would be great if we could get that report as soon as possible because people are crying out for it.

CHAIR - The Chair is hoping to read it over the few days he gets between Christmas and New Year.

Mr DEAN - The Leader did indicate we would get it before Christmas and it is an important report, minister, and a lot of people are waiting for.

Mr GROOM - I certainly understand and we are very keen to get it out there as soon as we are able to. I am not saying that it cannot happen before Christmas, I do not want to give you a time frame I cannot necessarily meet. We are absolutely committed to doing it as soon as we can and, I agree it is a very important area of future focus.

Mr VALENTINE - There is a conference in February that would like to be able to feed off it and there might be others earlier.

Mr GROOM - Sure.

CHAIR - Minister, you might take the opportunity to contact the Chair after these hearings and get back to the committee in regard to a time frame.

Mrs ARMITAGE - You mentioned the increase in visitors, so obviously you survey the visitors. Can you say where they came from? Are they mainly overseas, interstate or in Tasmania? Where are your visitors primarily coming from?

Mr LARGE - Most of the visitors come from Victoria, New South Wales and southern Queensland - probably 68 per cent of visitors. Our international visitation has gone up and is probably around about 19 per cent with the balance Tasmanian.

Mrs ARMITAGE - The 19 per cent, would that primarily be from China or is it fairly evenly based?

Mr LARGE - China has been a rapidly growing market, as it has been to Australia and Tasmania, so we have done well out of that. As the minister mentioned earlier, Hong Kong has been apparent but American and European markets are also strong.

Mr GROOM - I will give you some further statistics. In terms of the China numbers, as you would appreciate they have been on a very high trajectory.

Mrs ARMITAGE - And I noticed you have 10 Mandarin-speaking staff.

Mr GROOM - Yes, that is right, it has been a strong focus of the authority to make sure of that service and those numbers have stabilised over the course of the last couple of years. We were on a really high growth spurt.

In 2014-15 there were 25 808 visitors from China and that is including Hong Kong. In the last year there were 25 384. The Hong Kong component has increased significantly and is up 51 per cent over the course of the last year. UK and Ireland up 17 per cent. United

States is stable, a slight increase of 0.4 per cent. Singapore is up 68 per cent and New Zealand up 6.5 per cent, so it is a good solid trajectory.

Mrs ARMITAGE - With regard to Hong Kong, is there anything particularly we are doing there? Are you doing any particular promotions to do with social media in those areas?

Mr LARGE - Our social media is active. Certainly we are doing China and, as the minister has pointed out -

Mrs ARMITAGE - Hong Kong is picking up 51 per cent and I was wondering about that.

Mr LARGE - It is off a fairly low base.

Mrs ARMITAGE - Yes, but still it sells the product.

Mr WILLIE - Is that the same as Singapore? Singapore is 68 per cent.

Mr GROOM - Singapore was 934 and last year it was 2 316, so a significant increase.

Mr WILLIE - That is a very significant increase.

Mrs ARMITAGE - You have the 10 Mandarin-speaking staff, is that likely to stay stable or are you likely to increase?

Mr LARGE - That will depend on the Chinese visitation, but we would like to think that will continue to increase. Once more accommodation opens up in Hobart as that has been a factor that has perhaps slowed the growth down. We had a strong peak after the Chinese President's visit and hopefully we can get the Chinese President to come back to Tasmania.

Mr LARGE - Tasmania had a wonderful exposure out of that. We are very appreciative of being able to offer that experience to our Chinese-speaking visitors.

Mrs ARMITAGE - The dignitaries coming is a very good move and you are likely to invite them in the future.

Mr GROOM - Professor, do you want to talk about the group that are coming from China? There has been a very strong effort from the authority in relationship with China more broadly, not from a pure marketing perspective.

Prof SULLIVAN - Internationally, we would like to be regarded not just as an important tourism place, but as a place of excellence in heritage and conservation and in many respects we are.

We have had a long tradition of having Chinese visitors to our site, mainly from Mogao in western China where we have a sort-of sister site relationship. China International Council on Monuments and Sites, which is the biggest heritage organisation in the world - we have our own Australia ICOMOS - has decided to send and pay for a number of their site managers to Port Arthur for a week.

Mr VALENTINE - That is International Convention on Monuments and Sites. Is that right?

Prof SULLIVAN - Yes, that is it. It is the official advisor to UNESCO and the World Heritage Committee. China ICOMOS has the biggest numbers in the world and we have maintained really good relations through work we have done in China over the years with GETI (Government Education and Training International) and a range of people.

When they are looking to give their managers an experience of western heritage management, especially the values based management we use at Port Arthur, which is really important. It is very simple, simple minded one might say, but you run into trouble if you do not do it. That is, you look at everything you do at the site including tourism, making money, looks to enhance the values of the place.

Mr VALENTINE - Protect the base product.

Prof SULLIVAN - That is correct. It is a simple thing but unless you are a heritage manager and you manage in that way you can get into a lot of trouble running amok with tourism et cetera.

Mrs ARMITAGE - Sometimes simple things are the best, aren't they?

Prof SULLIVAN - Correct. They are very keen on this because we paid for one of their senior managers from ICOMOS to come to one of our courses the year before last. He was very impressed and out of that has come this.

CHAIR - I am mindful we only have until 11.30 a.m. We might need to move to the annual report. All this information is fantastic if we had more time.

Minister, the visitor numbers are up but so are operating costs. We are not making much ground. Is this fair to say, when it comes to the business?

Mr LARGE - If you have more visitors you need more staff and expenses go up.

CHAIR - Is that proportional, in your view?

Mr LARGE - Absolutely.

CHAIR - We are not over-staffing, although you did talk about long queues earlier.

Mr GROOM - With visitation heading the way it is it would be difficult to be over-staffing at this juncture. The authority is focused on ensuring efficiency in their operations. We have heard Professor Sullivan and Jane talk to the Visitor Centre making sure we are approaching costs in a practical sense. That is an example of the commitment, but it is a challenge. We have an extremely popular asset and visitation is increasing. That is likely to continue, based on the trends available, so it is important it is well serviced.

CHAIR - That is fine. There was an increase of 340 000 visitors but the operating costs have considerably increased?

Mr LARGE - We have over 200 staff on our books, preparing for this summer. Not all full-time obviously but it works out to about 156 FTEs. I have been on the authority for a long time.

CHAIR - Hence, the question to you.

Mr VALENTINE - It is a long way from the two in 1950s.

Mr LARGE - It is a good problem to have but a real challenge for us. It will be in 2017, coping with that number of people while we do not have most of the Visitor Centre for most of the year.

Prof SULLIVAN - Part of the visitor experience we value is our staff giving people a really good time and responding very well. They are under increasing pressure and we have to be careful that we continue to maintain them as a happy group that can give people a good experience. I am happy to say we did a great deal of work with them when redesigning the Visitor Centre. They really are the drivers of that because they know what the issues are. They know what it is like to be in there on a wet Sunday at 1 p.m.

Mr FINCH - If I can pursue the story recently about this hotel push for the Peninsula, the increased numbers that have come in with the Three Capes track and the opportunities that might create for a new mid-range hotel. For years, Federal has touted this idea they are going to put some accommodation there, which they haven't proceeded with. My curiosity is about the land they might develop it on. Is that in the World Heritage Area, part of PAHSMA's responsibility? Does Federal own that land? With that question also comes this idea of the mid-range hotel and where plans are for that.

Mr LARGE - One of the welcome things about Three Capes is that about 40 per cent of visitors are staying at least a night before or after, and that has been fantastic. Federal purchased a lease on land owned by the site in 2004, so we have been waiting a long time for this to happen, but it is going to happen. The development will start on 1 July 2018 and be completed by the end of 2019. The existing hotel will be knocked down, commencing 1 July 2018, and will be completed in 2019. Federal has learnt a lot out of the Saffire experience. When they originally came to talk to us in 2005-06 they had completely different ideas on what they were going to do there. They have now scaled the development back to a much less intrusive building - that was one of our issues in overlooking a World Heritage site. It is 20 rooms, based on the Saffire experience. They still have a few hoops to go through with the various approvals we had to do for the business centre. That includes local council, the PAHSMA board, Tasmanian Heritage Council, and the Commonwealth. They have engaged a heritage expert to help them through that process. We have established a project control group made up of Port Arthur staff and Federal staff. We have had one meeting, and another one tomorrow, to identify issues of concern to us before the development commences so that is taken into consideration in the planning.

Once the Comfort Inn goes - the Port Arthur Motor Inn - that takes out 35 to 40 rooms. We are concerned about that because there are only two hotels in the Port Arthur area that can take coaches. We are going to lose half our coach market. We partnered with the Tasman Council and received a grant to do an investment opportunity analysis of another hotel with 40 to 50 rooms on the Tasman Peninsula. Consultants have produced that report. It is out there being promoted by State Growth, Tourism Tasmania, the Tasman

Council and us in trying to identify a developer that may be interested in setting up another hotel there. Three or four different sites have been identified as suitable. That is all part of the report and it is available to anybody who wants it.

Mr FINCH - You talk about coaches, but would that take walkers from the Three Capes Track? Would that be sufficient to cover the demand?

Mr LARGE - I think so, if we could get another hotel there. There is another development just across the road from the site - Port Arthur Villas - that has recently changed hands. The new purchaser intends to put up some cabins up there, so that will increase accommodation. If we get another 40 to 50 room hotel that will be enough for the present, but that still has to happen. The Three Capes people won't be able to spend \$1500 or \$1600 staying at the new Federal development. That is a completely different market, as is Saffire. Federal is confident from the Saffire experience, and from interest in bookings and actual bookings, that the Port Arthur/Federal development will dovetail very nicely into the five-star properties they currently have in the state.

Mr GROOM - If you reflect on the experience at Freycinet and Coles Bay with the Saffire property. Through that development there has been a really significant commitment in marketing that - national and international - which has the broader benefits. There is no doubt the combination of this intent, together with the Three Capes, together with the extraordinary success of Port Arthur, is presenting an attractive investment proposition. From the Government's perspective, we are keen to promote that opportunity. I know the authority has been doing that, the local council, and I have been involved in that. There is a very real opportunity to ensure that we can attract the appropriate investment to underpin the growth.

Mr DEAN - I only had one other question. It has been raised that the ratepayers of the Tasman Council get free entry to the Port Arthur site. I believe this is a community thing you are engaged in. It has been suggested that Tasmanians ought to receive a discounted price for entry to that facility. It is a Tasmanian icon. Tasmanians make a contribution through their taxes. Has that ever been a consideration?

Mr GROOM - I know this issue is raised more broadly. From our perspective, I want to make sure that it represents good value to Tasmanians, as well as anyone utilises the site. It is not something we have under active consideration. I understand the point. From the Government's perspective, the key is to ensure there is good value. I do not think there is any doubt that this is a very high-quality tourism experience. I would not underestimate it, including in a global context.

Mr LARGE - We have a two-year pass called a ticket of leave, which is particularly designed for the Tasmanian market. If people have visitors, they can bring their visitors and they get a ticket of leave, a two-year pass. That entitles them to free entry every day of the year because we are open 365 days a year.

Mr DEAN - Any Tasmanian is able to purchase that pass?

Mr LARGE - Purchase that pass, and that entitles them to free entry. It is not only residents of the Tasman Council that get free entry. If you own a shack down there, for instance, if you are a ratepayer, you also get free entry. Lots of people who have shacks,

from Hobart and other places, also qualify for free entry. They produce their rate notice and they are allowed in. Also people who were affected by 1996 who just want to go to the memorial gardens and spend some quiet time there, also get free entry.

Mr DEAN - The cost of that two-year pass?

Mr LARGE - It is an extra \$6. You purchase your entry and pay an extra \$6. Anybody can do that, not only Tasmanians. Some people on the mainland who are regular visitors purchase a two-year pass.

Mr VALENTINE - If you had free entry for Tasmanians, it would encourage them to take others there.

Mr DEAN - That is the point. When you have the ratepayer as free entry that is good because they take other people with them. Rob is right. If it was free entry to Tasmanians, it is unlikely they would go there on their own. They would be taking visitors with them into the site. The point has merit.

Mr GROOM - I understand the point.

Mr VALENTINE - With respect to the future funding for the demand associated with the defined benefits super scheme, presumably it is going to continue to rise, out to 2023 we heard the other day. Then it will reduce gradually. Is that going to be a problem? How are you going to manage that? You have some long-term employees who are in defined benefits, do you not?

Mr LARGE - We have some money allocated for superannuation requirements in the future, obviously not enough but -

CHAIR - There are others who don't have enough either.

Mr LARGE - And there are some who don't have any. I think it is a figure of \$2.3 million that we've set aside that Treasury won't let us touch because it's planning for the future. At one stage we were thinking about using that money for the Visitor Centre, but Treasury said no, so we are borrowing money from Tascorp to help fund that.

Mr VALENTINE - Do you invest that or does Tascorp?

Mr LARGE - No, we invest it.

Mr VALENTINE - You invest the \$2.3 million to get a return to build that over time? You say you are putting \$2.3 million aside to cope with it.

Mr LARGE - Yes, and the interest that accumulates from that \$2.3 million stays with the fund.

Mr VALENTINE - Where have you got it placed to get that interest return? Is that through the state government?

Mr LARGE - It's with a bank. It's either with the Commonwealth Bank or the Bendigo Bank, I can't remember which one. We play the two off together in terms of getting the best interest return.

Mr VALENTINE - You don't put it into long-term shares or anything like that, it's just a straight interest.

Mr LARGE - No.

Mr VALENTINE - Safe, low risk.

CHAIR - Probably a good approach.

Mr VALENTINE - The funding of the new Visitor Centre then, how is that being funded, can you just explain that?

Mr LARGE - It's a mix of our own internal funds and we have negotiated a loan with Tascorp with the shareholder minister's approval. That's in place, but we will obviously use our own funds first, rather than paying interest to Tascorp. I think the Tascorp money will kick in probably in June-July, we'll start to draw that down and then hopefully we will have three or four bumper years and be able to pay the debt off as quickly as we can.

Mr VALENTINE - It seems like you are on track, not to have too much of a pun, with the Three Capes Track to improving your fiscal position, to put it that way.

My final question is with respect to the expertise you have within PAHSMA. Again, we alluded to this in our report, making that expertise available to other heritage groups around the state to help them also grow interest in heritage. I'm thinking of Woolmers and Brickendon and also other smaller groups like St Helens History Room and those sorts of people who can't afford consultancies. They simply can't afford them. Do you have a strategic plan with respect to that?

Mr GROOM - With sites like Woolmers, for example, there is very direct engagement. There is no doubt there is significant expertise that has been built up over a long period. I think you're right, it's one of the great assets of Tasmania and it presents opportunities in the Tasmanian context, but also nationally and internationally, for exchange.

Mr VALENTINE - They're only getting 26 000 visitors a year, not terribly many at Woolmers compared to 344 000, so maybe the connections could be a bit stronger.

Mr GROOM - It's an excellent site.

Prof. SULLIVAN - We do make a lot of our expertise available. We have a grant from the Commonwealth government to coordinate all the convict sites in Australia. We have a coordinator for those. They provide a lot of technical and other support to all the convict sites on the World Heritage List in Australia.

Mr VALENTINE - Woolmers is one of those.

Prof. SULLIVAN - Woolmers is one of those, but so is Fremantle and a range of sites in New South Wales, Norfolk Island, et cetera. That is one way in which we try to provide management guidance and assistance, working with them in a committee. Second, we do provide specific technical advice to Woolmers and Brickendon when they want it. Third, also we provide a lot of advice and assistance on the Tasman Peninsula to private owners and people. We have to be a bit careful - I hate to keep saying this, but I know the board will make me say it - about stretching ourselves too thin.

Mr VALENTINE - I understand that.

Prof. SULLIVAN - We're very conscious of the fact that Port Arthur has this reserve of expertise, which is not currently generally available. Therefore we are working strategically, I suppose you might say, through our submissions to the inquiry and a range of other ways, to try to assist and broaden that without, once again, spreading the butter too thinly over a bigger area. But we're very open to suggestions for us to assist in that way.

Mr VALENTINE - If there was extra funding coming to you to undertake that, then that might be something the board would look kindly on.

Prof SULLIVAN - That could be the case.

Mr GROOM - It is not only about funding. To the authority's credit, they have developed this reputation because of the build up of expertise. It can be tempting to try to leverage off that to solve every other issue. We must make sure we get the judgment right with the focus of the authorities.

Dr HARRINGTON - An example of the areas we try to take opportunity, we were very successful with the Green Army programs. We receive four, but you probably know the Green Army program will be ceasing.

CHAIR - There is a new one starting up?

Dr HARRINGTON - The program overall will finish. We have finished our second but we have another two five-month block coming forward. With the last, we did some work in partnership with and to assist the Ross community. There is a convict quarry there and they need assistance with gorse removal, everyone's favourite pastime. We spent some days there with them.

The next Green Army program we have planned we are hoping to do some work with some of the other convict sites on the Tasman Peninsula. That work needs to be supervised by someone who understands heritage. We are often asked to speak at forums. One of the things we do, admittedly this is not necessarily for Tasmania, but we reviewed the new maintenance manual for Carver[TBC] on Norfolk Island. We try as much as possible, if people want assistance and input into this kind of documentation. We can act as a coordinator and commentator.

Mr VALENTINE - It is great we have that reputation.

Mrs ARMITAGE - I noticed the big dip in the graph, in 2012-13. Can you give a reason for such a drop in visitor numbers?

Mr LARGE - Bushfire.

Mrs ARMITAGE - Purely the bushfire?

Mr LARGE - Yes, January 2013. We lost our eight busiest days of the year and the road was closed.

Mrs ARMITAGE - It gradually started to pick up again?

Mr GROOM - It is an extraordinary recovery if you look at it.

Mrs ARMITAGE - I have been looking at your Facebook page, which is good and has wonderful reviews. Mobility issues recur from time to time. They all say, the golf buggy drivers are good but there are a few areas that are hard to get through. Are there any areas you are looking at or are you trying to make mobility easier for people who have a lack of mobility?

Mr LARGE - We have a bigger coach. We have had courtesy vehicles, which take about four or five people and it can take wheelchairs. We are introducing a vehicle tour, Commandant's Carriage tour, and that kicks off in the next couple of weeks. We think that will be popular for people with mobility difficulties and they will have a guide. The tour goes for about an hour and a half. They stop at various places and the guide will take them in. I think that will take off.

A lot of the site, because of the nature of the terrain, is difficult. We have to be careful we do not compromise what we have in terms of trying to put paths -

Mrs ARMITAGE - I notice with the buggies, they said they have hooks for the wheelchairs on the back. That is really good. That was one of the things I noticed on the reviews and the reviews are fabulous.

Mr GROOM - It has been helpful with the kids. I speak from my own experience. They are good at keeping an eye out. I was standing with a couple of the kids and they approached. These are practical examples of where the authorities are focused on visitor experience and the practical issues people are dealing with.

Mr FINCH - I want to talk about the ferry service for Maria Island. PAHSMA is involved with a group, along with Primary Industries, Parks, Water and the Environment and State Growth departments. You spoke before about this development of Maria Island. Will the group stay in place, inclusive of PAHSMA, to oversee this development and maintenance of Maria Island?

Mr GROOM - Are you talking about management of the island itself?

Mr FINCH - Yes. Could you tell me something more about the group you drew together for the ferry decisions?

Mr GROOM - For the purposes of the ferry we ensured there was representation across each of the key stakeholders. That was to ensure we had access to all the different inputs. That has been a very successful process.

In terms of the Maria Island management going forward, there has been great cooperation between PAHSMA and Parks in looking at the various models and providing advice back to Government. That advice is now with Government and we are currently considering it. We have not determined the exact model in response. That is something we are currently considering but certainly, from our perspective, we believe it is important there is representation across stakeholders. That is something we are focused on maintaining. It has been very important.

Mr FINCH - Because there are big opportunities at Maria Island. Whilst it is used it has also been a bit controversial because of access to the island and the regular ferry service, on which a decision has now been made. It must be disappointing for the other two operators who have been there for some time to have dipped on the final contract.

Mr GROOM - Yes, you could understand that. It has been very important to go through a process to identify what we considered to be the best possible service to facilitate visitation to the island. We are very happy with the outcome. It has been a very important one. From our perspective in terms of Maria Island more broadly, we agree it as an untapped jewel. It is certainly not maximised. The role it can play from a tourism perspective and therefore provide the opportunity for people to experience it is magnificent.

CHAIR - We visited it as part of my electorate tour.

Mr GROOM - I took Ruth and the kids over recently and it was fantastic. If you have not been to Maria Island recently you should go and check it out. It can also play a very important role for supporting regional jobs in that part of the state. This is one that we have to get right. We have been very focused on the ferry perspective and are currently carefully considering the excellent work done in preparing a report on the management model.

Mr DEAN - I have a question on the wi-fi. Is it up and running?

Mr LARGE - Absolutely. We have to make sure we continue it when we have not got a visitor centre, so we are making arrangements to do that.

Mr DEAN - That is critical to most people today when they go into these sites to have that capacity to use wi-fi. It is free of charge, a government initiative, which is a great thing.

Mr LARGE - It is nice to see our visitors at Felons Bistro taking a photo of their meal and sending it to China.

CHAIR - I have a question in regard to any issues with staffing. With 174 FTEs or around 200 people it is not on your doorstep for community, particularly if you have a part shift. Do you have high turnover of staff? I know you get this question repeatedly but we like to keep up with things.

Mr LARGE - We put on additional staff over the summer period. From probably two or three weeks ago we start to train staff for the summer. Most of those fixed-term staff work

until probably the end of April or middle of May. We do not have that high a level of turnover. A lot of those summer staff come back each year, do something else over the winter period or have a holiday, and that is just enough work for them. There are a lot more people moving to the Tasman municipality, which is good. I would not say, with 200 people, you do not have the odd problem but we work our way through that.

Mr VALENTINE - With respect to the Jacky Smith collection that went up recently in Copping, did you manage to capture any of those assets that were of interest to Port Arthur?

Dr HARRINGTON - We had a look. In terms of our funding, unless it is something really extraordinary and special, we tend not to see ourselves as a collecting institution.

Mr VALENTINE - There was nothing extraordinary enough to capture?

Dr HARRINGTON - No.

Mr FINCH - Professor, you mentioned earlier about this fantastic increase in numbers and you mentioned cruise ships. Does this mean the cruise ships come in close to Port Arthur or are they bussed in?

Prof. SULLIVAN - No, these are the ones that come into the bay.

Mr FINCH - So you are able to get them into port?

Prof. SULLIVAN - Yes, we have extended our jetty and facilities there in the last couple of years specifically to make a safer transit for people.

Mr FINCH - How many are you expecting.

Mr LARGE - We are expecting 22.

Prof. SULLIVAN - This has a number of challenges. From their point of view, we have to set up our operations on the waterfront. They are not going to go through the whole visitor experience other people do, so our staff are very concerned to ensure that is happening and at the same time as giving the other visitors who are coming in the other way a good experience. It is a logistic challenge, but one we are very pleased about.

CHAIR - Thank you very much. Minister, thank you for your time today - and also Stephen, Sharon and Jane.

Mr GROOM - I would like to extend my thanks to Professor Sullivan, Stephen, Jane, Nicky and all the group at PAHSMA who do a fantastic job. I also want to thank my office staff who have assisted with the preparation of today's hearing.

CHAIR - We certainly appreciate the work that goes into preparing for this but it is an important aspect of our parliamentary duties. Thank you.

The committee suspended at 11.32 a.m.